(iv) Lok Pal Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 3.8.1998 to set up the Lok Pal to look into the allegations of corruption against high public functionaries. The Bill, however, lapsed on the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha on 26.4.1999. A Group of Ministers have been constituted to consider contention aspect.

(v) The Government set up a Working Group on "Right to Information and Transparency" in January, 1997. It submitted its report to the Government on 21st May, 1997. The recommendations made by the Working Group were examined comprehensively and a draft Bill incorporating the recommendations of the Group of Ministers is under preparation.

(vi) Based on the findings of the various Evaluation Studies, the mid-course corrections have been carried out in the Poverty Alleviation Programmes periodically. Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes were restructured w.e.f. 1.4.1999 to improve the efficacy of these Programmes. The Integrated Rural Development Programme was restructured as a holistic programme of micro enterprise covering all aspects of self-employment including organization of rural poor into self-help groups, their capacity building, planning of activity cluster, infrastructure build-up, technology, credit and marketing facilities. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been restructured with the primary objective of creating demand-driven community village infrasctructure. Employment Assurance Scheme has been restructured as a single wage-employment programme and seeks to provide employment in lean season. Self-employment and Wage-employment Schemes in urban areas were also restructured w.e.f. 1.12.1997 under Swaranjayanti Shahri Rozgar yojana. The Government has taken measures to ensure active participation of the people as partners in the process of development.

Permanent Membership of Security Council

*647. SHRI K.M. KHAN:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is a serious contender for a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations;

(b) if so, whether any formal move has been initiated in this direction and if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the viewpoints of some of the existing permanent members of the Security Council like USA, Russia, U.K and France have been elicited in this regard; and

(d) if so, the response received from these countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Indian candidature was announced during the 49th UN General Assembly session in 1994. Since then our candidature has been reiterated at all subsequent General Assemblies of the UN, including at the 53rd (1998) and 54th (1999) Sessions, through statements made by our Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister respectively.

(c) and (d) Russia has supported the Indian candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council at the UN, while France has publicly expressed its support for Indian candidature during the recent visit of the Indian President to France. The question of India's candidature has also been taken up with the US and UK.

Population and Ratio of Poverty Line

*648. SARDAR BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDAR:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the population at the time of Independence and the ratio of below poverty line and above poverty line at that time; and

(b) the population now and the ratio of below poverty line and above poverty line at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) The population and poverty estimates are not available for the year 1947. As per 1951 Census India's population was 361.1 million. Poverty estimates